

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace ¶0020 on page 5 with the following amended paragraph:

[0020] Server 214 also couples to data network 210. Server 214 is a general purpose computer programmed to provide the automated sales support application. In alternative embodiments, server 214 may only provide a portion of the automated sales support application and functions in conjunction with other portions of the application that are co-located on the salesperson computer and/or the customer computer. Server 214 also couples to storage device 216, such as a magnetic, optical, or magneto-optical storage device. Storage device 216 stores target data, system settings, completed reports, notification history, customer data, corporate records, and other information utilized by and generated by the system.

Please replace ¶0021 on page 6 with the following amended paragraph:

[0021] The automated sales support application 218, executing in memory 220 of server 214, is able to access the storage device 216 and provide requested information to salespersons and customers at computers 100a and 100b respectively. That information may include system settings, previously completed reports and a history of notifications provided to a salesperson. The automated sales support application 218 on server 214 also monitors communication between a customer and the corporation (i.e., any of the corporation's representatives). Upon detecting selected targets in a communication (i.e., items of interest within a communication), the server 214 thereafter directs notification to a salesperson associated with the customer that initiated the communication. Such notification is directed to the associated salesperson at his/her salesperson computer 102a. The notification may be a summary version of the communication of interest or the server 214 may, if desired, direct the entire, original communication to the salesperson computer 102a associated with the salesperson that is to be notified. Further, the automated sales support application may be configured by the salesperson so that notifications occur immediately or at [[a]] specified times or intervals.

Please replace ¶0029 on page 9 with the following amended paragraph:

[0029] Target items 326 are preprogrammed items of interest that may be found in customer communications with the sales corporation. Target items may include key alphanumeric characters/strings/emoticons (e.g., ?, !, help, :-||, :-(-, :'-(-, #-o), timely product offerings provided by the sales corporation (e.g., the name of the latest service offer), and special codes provided by a salesperson (e.g., 411, 911, KILROY and other codes). A salesperson is able to individually control the selection of target items according to his/her personal preference. For example, a certain salesperson may not desire to be informed of communications containing a[[n]] question mark, which should be better sent to a more technically oriented salesperson or technical consultant assigned to the customer. At the same time, this certain salesperson, who handles only customer complaints, may desire to be informed of communication containing an exclamation mark. The selection of target items in the application is extendable so that a salesperson can select targets for each individual customer to which the salesperson is assigned.

Please replace ¶0032 on page 10 with the following amended paragraph:

[0032] Delivery of customer - corporation communication notifications to the appropriate salesperson is dependent on an accurate mapping of an individual customer to an individual member of the sales corporation's sales staff. System settings 328 includes the mapping of salesperson to customer. When an individual customer [[is]] interacts with the corporation (for whatever reason), the salesperson assigned to[[]] /[[]] associated with that individual customer is informed of the interaction. In this manner, the salesperson will be provided with the knowledge of all communications between the customer and the corporation. The appropriate salesperson is informed of the time, date, and contents of the communication.

Please replace ¶0033 on page 10 with the following amended paragraph:

[0033] For example, a corporation can establish~~[[ed]]~~ on-line (electronic) discussion groups and provid~~[[ed]]~~ its customers with permission to access these discussion groups on a restricted communication channel. Customers must identify themselves each time (e.g., log on) before ~~assessing~~ accessing a discussion group on a restricted channel. Within a discussion group, customers may read earlier posts and create replies and/or new posts. When an individual customer creates a reply or a new post within a corporation provided on-line discussion group, the content of that post is be automatically analyzed by the channel monitor. If the content of the post contains any of a number of pre-defined target items, the salesperson~~[[/]]~~(s) assigned to that individual customer is informed by a notification. The notification may include the time, date, and some form of the content of the post on the on-line discussion group.

Please replace ¶0038 on page 12 with the following amended paragraph:

[0038] For security purposes, the automated sales support application may request that management staff authenticate themselves prior to inputting/amending salesperson - customer associations. If authorized, management staff are able to establish/terminate the associations as described further below with respect to Fig. 5. At least one sales-corporation employee (i.e., a salesperson, e.g., an employee of the sales staff) should be assigned to~~[[/]]~~ or associated with each customer corporation to ensure that customer communications with the sales corporation are duly monitored and appropriately handled.

Please replace ¶0042 on page 13 with the following amended paragraph:

[0042] Figure 6 illustrates, in general, the functionality provided by the automated sales support application. Specifically, the application includes a channel monitor 610 that watches communications sent and received on on-line communication channels.

Based on stored targets 612 and system settings 614 established by salespersons, the application determines whether the received communication has any item of interest to a salesperson associated with the customer communicating with the sales corporation. If items of interest are located in a communication, the application generates a notification message 616 to the appropriate salesperson. The application also has a reports module 618 that allows querying by authorized salespersons to generate reports that detail the history of targets found in customer communications. (i.e., what, if any, targets have been found within a customers' on-line communications). Only salespersons who have been assigned to [[/]] or associated with a customer have the ability to learn of targets within that customer's communications with the sales corporation.